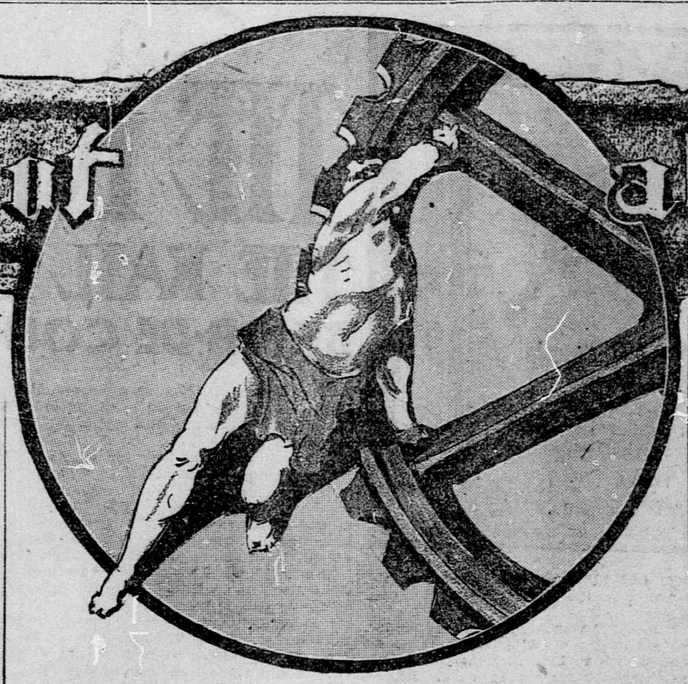
The Life Story of a Department Clerk.



WASHINGTON, D. C., April 26, 1905.

To the Editor of The Washington Times.

Dear Sir: Twenty years ago I came to Washington a young man, filled with ambition. I was one of the first in my part of the country to pass a civil service examination, and I entered the departmental service with strong hopes of developing what abilities I had and rendering a good account of them by working for the Government. Today every chance of doing anything with my abilities is gone. I am a hack, hemmed in by the restrictions and little politics of one of the departments, and I am utterly unable to get work anywhere else. In the retrospect of forty-four years my life is a decided failure.

I have written out the story of my transformation clearly and honestly. I have found it necessary to change names, of course, but all the other details are accurate reports of my own experience.

I believe that if the young men of today could read my story, they would find it a powerful warning against entering the service where individual ability counts for nothing, or almost nothing, and ambition is stifled beyond hope. For that reason I hope you can find room in your paper for the inclosed, with the understanding that, if you use it, you are to edit out none of the facts. If you cannot use it, please return to the address on the inclosed slip.

Very truly yours,
A COG IN THE WHEEL.

SYNOPSIS OF PRECEDING CHAPTERS.

In the "first days of the civil service"—away back in the eighties—the author of "The Life Story of a Department Clerk," a young Indiana lawyer, came to Washington to accept a clerkship in the office of the Assistant Attorney General, having "the dreamiest sort of a dream" that he had planned his way into the office of the Attorney General.

He describes his entry into the service of the Government and the shocks to his dignity, administered not only by the "lordly watchman," but by future associates.

He tells how he plunged into the routine work of applying "the little law" in printed pamphlets to letters of inquiry.

The reader is made acquainted with his roommates, the chief, "a man of fifty or fifty-five years, short, and half fat, overhearty in manner, with puffy eyelids, unkempt, profane; a hard drinker, a gambler, kind to everyone; a lawyer by courtesy only," and one who owes his position to a campaign speech; the second in authority, Mr. Macpherson, a tall, extremely taciturn, thin-lipped, difficult-to-approach individual, "a lawyer by virtue of a general legal knowledge as extended and accurate," says the writer, "as any I have ever encountered;" an Irishman, O'Mara, about thirty years old, "suave, fluent, even tempered, and a fine advertising agent of his own talents," who knew little law, spent much time in "gassing the gerls," and who "dafied the Dimmycrats" to put him out; a widow, Mrs. Errol, who was appointed through the influence of her husband's friends, and an unmarried woman, "the Dragonfly," who seemed to rely for her office standing upon the intimate friendship with a member of the National Senate.

The first year passes by before the author realizes it. He enjoys "living the life" in a big city, which affords diversions unattainable in the small community from which he came. Nevertheless he does not devote all his spare moments to pastime, for he pursues his studies in the endeavor to get a diploma from a school of law. So passes the first winter and the next.

Then comes an event which brings about a change in all. The chief of the division dies, and O'Mara becomes his successor, although fellow-clerks believe Macpherson entitled to the promotion. "Yis, it is Mr. O'Mara, and I'm sorry you are disappointed," says the appointee in noting the look of surprise on the face of the writer. Macpherson quietly makes arrangements to leave the division, and the writer takes steps to do likewise. His judgment tells him to go back home. His pride urges him to stay. He catches the "department fever" and obtains a transfer, O'Mara lending his aid. He learns with surprise that his new position is a clerkship, requiring no legal attainments; but reconciles himself, as best he can, to the "bed he has made and has to lie upon."

O'Mara in the meanwhile reaps praises from the newspapers for the "reorganization" of the division.

During the Harrison Administration the scramble after plums kills the last of the writer's theories on the merit system as then enforced, and he accepts the advice of Mr. Macpherson to "join and help run" the Indiana Republican Association, lest it run him out of the service. Attacks are made on his qualifications for membership through the machinations of O'Mara, but an unexpected friend is found in Colonel Powell, the new assistant attorney general and conscientious public servant, and the writer wins in his fight for office in the association. He secures a transfer to the office directly under the supervision of Colonel Powell and is made happy by a chance to return to legal work. He undertakes the labor of compiling the laws which affect his department. In the meanwhile he brings from Indiana a girl "who had been trained to think the making of a home for her husband and her children the best work God could give her." Days begin in which the sun touches every leaf and blade of grass with gold.

The writer rejects a promising opportunity to return to his home town and practice law.

The volume of laws is finished and meets with the approval of the compiler's friends, Colonel Powell and Macpherson. The department, however, gives no credit for the publication to the man who did the work. That goes to the Secretary.

Home expenses and a new arrival, Baby Annie, plunge the young lawyer into debt, and though friends lend assistance and celebrate the birth of the child by arranging a salary increase, every day finds trouble "leaping on."

O'Mara is detected in an act of insubordination and dismissed. He "falls on his feet" and is made district agent of a great contracting company.

Digging persistently along, though not content to dig, the Indianian develops into a capable routine clerk. His hopes grow high when a chance for promotion is offered through an examination, but they are dashed to the ground when he learns that the average he made was reduced by a poor mark in letter writing. The winners of the examination are men incapable to fill a post of executive power, and Philip Schuyler is, after all, called upon to assume the duties of a division chief. He is told that the question of salary will be settled later. He finds out later through Colonel Powell that all the substantial recognition was given to other clerks who could not carry the responsibilities.

In the endeavor to add to his income Schuyler determines to become an insurance agent, but he devotes but one day to this "side issue," and relinquishes it because his conscience revolts against the theft of time belonging to the Government. He has a talk with his Congressman, who says he would like to help him to get the increased salary that belongs to his position, and who indulges in a tirade against the "little iceberg in the White House," who has chances, in his home State of Indiana, he declares, are not worth "two whoops in hell."

Schuyler learns through Powell that some one else is to be appointed nominal chief of his division, but that he is expected to continue the actual work. Schuyler accepts the advice of a friend to go home on a campaigning trip, because "merit ain't going to plow deep with that Cleveland crowd; and if he (Harrison) wins he will readjust that chiefship business right enough." He receives a great ovation on his arrival in his home town.

Intense enthusiasm and complimentary notices in the home newspaper are the rewards of Schuyler's speechmaking, and the only rewards. A remark made by the Congressman concerning Powell and Schuyler—"What they don't know about practical politics would sink a ship; they talk like the whole dictionary let loose, but the two of them together ain't got ten votes in their whole damn vocabulary"—seems justified by results. The election proves to be a Democratic landslide, and Philip returns to Washington crestfallen.

He finds that those who thought the cause of civil reform would not plow deep during the Cleveland Administration were greatly mistaken, few changes being made for political reasons except among bureau chiefs.

"Judge" Wheat, from Boston, becomes the Assistant Attorney General and announces that he will unite the salary and the work of the chiefship in the division in which Schuyler works and judge of the merits of the man to be appointed by the record of his labors.

O'Mara's slighting record of Schuyler's services is taken from its pigeonhole. Judge Wheat expresses his disappointment, and Schuyler meditates that it is hard to reconcile himself to the thought that O'Mara and his gambling partner still had influence enough to make him suffer.

XXI.

OUR little family was prepared for the news before the selection of the new division chief was announced. "We have no right to expect it," said Annie, "when you were so prominent in opposing Mr. Cleveland's election." I reached the same opinion, although I did not build it upon that "prominence," but rather upon those two portentous entries of "Fair."

When it came, it hit us hard. I was told one morning, that the chief wanted me. I hurried in to the desk where I had talked so often and with such confidence to Colonel Powell. Mr. Wheat was evidently expecting others as well as myself. As the others did not appear, he nodded for me to sit down. In my nervousness I chose, instead, to talk with him standing, and so, while he evened some papers on his desk by patting their four sides, my heart almost stood still as I heard him say this:

"Mr. Schuyler, I am very sorry, indeed, to have to say that we have selected some one else to be division chief, and that you are to be transferred into my room." (I could not trust myself to answer at all, and only noticed, irrelevantly, that the top paper of the pile had been blown out of its place.) "Much in your record recomended you strongly. At first I thought you must surely be selected. But much in your record condemned you strongly, as well. I think the greatest credit is due to you for compiling the laws of the department; but I think that makes it all the more reprehensible in you that you violated those laws. That is what you have done, Mr. Schuyler."

"Violated the laws, Mr. Wheat?" I interposed, in dismay. "Why, I haven't violated the laws."

"You certainly have. You have openly violated the civil service law by taking to the stump during the recent campaign, and you have just as openly violated the rules of the department by soliciting insurance among your subordinates during business hours.

"Both these offenses seem to be well known to the whole bureau," he went on, as though to make my remonstrance altogether ridiculous. "We are not trying you for them, or you should have been given a chance to plead to them. We are choosing a chief of a division, and in such a matter we thought we were justified in reaching our conclusion on grounds which we deemed sufficient without consulting you. If you wish to deny either charge do so. We shall be glad to hear what you have to say on the subject. But we are hardly likely to change our selection."

I assented blankly, my brain was too dizzy for clear thinking. But Mr. Wheat was evidently not content I should make no reply, and waited for me to speak until the silence made me feel like a coward.

"That is perfectly just, sir," I said, with my throat so dry I could hardly form the words, 'I ought to have known the law. And—if I knew it—I ought never—to have—violated it. But—(by this time I was so impatient with myself I hardly knew what I said) I know it is no excuse—but you will understand my course better—if you know that I did not know the law."

"What do you mean by that?"

Courteous But Cold.

Mr. Wheat's tone was courteous, but extremely cold.

"Well"—I fought on, groping for the reasonable explanation I knew the facts would warrant, but which I could not then find—"the law seemed to be a dead letter. Every other chief in the department took an active part in politics, as active as he pleased, and nearly every one had some outside business. Of course, I knew both were forbidden. But if all the other offenders are to be punished, Mr. Wheat, why every man in conspicuous position in the department will have to suffer."

The chief clasped his hands behind his head and leaned slowly back in his chair. At the end of that operation he said indulgently:

"We are not considering 'every man of conspicuous position in the department' for this post, Mr. Schuyler."

When that had soaked in he went on: "We could not escape considering these offenses because they were formally called to our attention—one by a clerk in your own division, and the other by the Representative-elect from your district."

"Who is it in my division?" I demanded hotly.

"Well"—the chief's tone was speculative and deliberate—"he says he acted solely in the interest of the service, and I suppose we are bound to take him at his word. At any rate"—here he spoke decisively—"I think I ought not tell his name."

"Then what did Representative Mason charge?"

"He said that he himself heard you introduced at a Republican mass meeting as an official of the Government service in Washington, and that you did not even disclaim speaking as in that capacity."

I had nothing more to ask.

"Now, Mr. Schuyler, I want to do this thing as considerately as I can," Mr. Wheat resumed calmly. "Can you suggest anything better than this—that you transfer your things to my room tomorrow and your successor take the chief desk two or three days later?"

"I would rather have the thing done straightforwardly," I blurted.

"Well, then we will do it straightforwardly. Mr. Macpherson will take your desk at once. That is all, Mr. Schuyler."

"Mr. Schuyler, I am very sorry, indeed, to have to say that we have selected some one else to be division chief."

XXII.

The humiliation that bears so heavily before the eyes of other men is harder still to bear before the eyes of the woman who loves you and depends upon you and intrusts her life to you. I stood without flinching the removal of my things from O'Mara's old desk and the discredit of my transfer to a minor desk in the next room. I bore that bravely, because my heart was confident in its own purposes and my pride was strong. At the mere sight of Annie, however, my courage oozed away.

She was waiting for me in the doorway with our baby in her arms. Both of them laughed as I came up the walk. Yet before I reached the house Annie saw that something was wrong and called out to me:

"Hello, old man! What's up?"

I greeted them both without replying. While I hesitated what to say, Annie stepped to my side and put her head on my shoulder.

"You've heard—and they've named somebody else," she said.

I would have gone on into the house without saying anything, but the wife—now as unhappy as I—blocked my way and held our little daughter for me to take, crying:

"Philip! Philip! Please tell me what's the matter! If you've just not got that place, why none of us expected to get it. Is there anything else, Philip," she pleaded, "please tell me."

I cannot explain now how my impulse strangled my consideration. I loved Annie that afternoon so that my heart ached with the intensity of it. And I suffered twenty times more from this humiliation because it must make her suffer, too, than on my own account alone. But it was in my mood to be gruff. Hardly knowing what I did, I thrust little Annie back into her arms and brushed past them both, muttering:

"Don't make it worse than it has to be."

But Annie was too resolute to be repulsed—even by that.

"Philip," she insisted, placing herself directly in front of me, and holding my shoulder with her free hand, "Philip, you have been discharged!"

"No," I answered, "I haven't been discharged. They haven't been that kind to me. I've been disgraced and demoted on charges."

"On charges? Oh, Philip! On charges?"

"Yes, on charges. And fair ones. If I hadn't been a born darn fool, and a weakling and a tool for other men, I might not have come home tonight to make you unhappy."

"Never mind about that, dearest. Tell me what charges. You haven't been stealing?"

"No."

"Or lying?"

"No."

"Or drinking?"

"No."

"Then I don't care what the charges were. You couldn't do any of those things, I know. And yet, for a moment, Philip dear, I feared almost anything—you were so rough to me. Now do tell me what those charges are (reaching up to put her arm about both my shoulders with almost a motherly air.) Come over here to our window-seat, dearie, and let's talk it over."

Cried Like Boy of Six.

At that I caught them both in my arms and held them so close that the little daughter cried. Then—great, hulking man that I was—I broke down and cried like a boy of six. Then Annie cried, too. And then we all sat down crying, and the brave mother rocked her baby in her arms until she was quiet and we could talk.

I managed to tell Annie, after a while, of my talk with Mr. Wheat. She heard it, in spite of the baby's renewed cry and her own sobs, and nodded her head, or said, "Yes, I know, Philip," or assented, "Um hum," as though she did not know she was crying. When I finished she made me feel like a great baby, by saying at once, and in evident relief:

"Why, that isn't so bad, Philip. As you say, you were clearly in the wrong. But suppose you were—even then they have punished you for doing what all the other chiefs have done all the time and they have not been punished. I think they just wanted to get your place. That's what I think." And the tears dried on her cheeks and her spirit flashed in her eyes.

"As for Mr. Wheat, I've known men like that, Philip; men who never do anything wrong and never make any excuses for other people and always punish everyone else as hard as they can. And I never yet saw one of them who didn't get his deserts. Oh, but I wish you were away from it all!"

"I wish I were, too," I said.

"Then let's get away from it all, Philip," said the wife impulsively. "Let's strike out and get free of it. We can do it. The baby and I can live some way—with my parents, or yours, if need be. We can save enough to keep you from starving while you get on your feet. We could save it in a few months. Dearie, it's worth any sacrifice to get away."

"Yes," I answered, doggedly. "It's worth any sacrifice—almost. I couldn't bear to see you two suffer, but I could and would bear anything but that.

Plans to Strike Out.

"As long as you stay, Philip, this business will keep up. You will work hard, and lead your bureau, and everybody will admit that you have earned a promotion, and then it will go to somebody else. Or, what is worse, you will get the hard work and somebody else will get the salary."

"And when other men break the rules so freely that they become dead letters, it is all right," I assented, "but if I do it then I am hauled up on charges and made to feel like a thief. I sometimes wish it was not my nature to try so hard. It would be better for us, Annie, if I did as little work as I could and depended on pull."

In that strain we talked until long after midnight, forgetting our dinner until 9 o'clock, and going to bed at last only that we could be at work early the next day. We were expressing for the first time the accumulated indignation of five years. And the slights and injustice of five years in one of the executive departments can rouse the heart to a bitter protest, indeed, when once it breaks lose. I went over my purposes in entering the service—my air castle of earning my way to the Attorney Generalship; my ambition to achieve one promotion every year for merit; my faith that I could rise to a post of responsibility and dignity by serving the Government loyally. We both recounted my experience—how my first promotion had come in order to get me out of the way; and my second in lieu of the credit for compiling the laws; how insubordinates and incompetents were promoted all about me; how the examination for promotion defeated its own purpose; how my superiors, even when my friends, found themselves unable, for merit alone, to reward my work with the salary they said it deserved; and, now, how the application of the law had been specialized in order to punish me while scores of other offenders were unscathed.

Evidently we had both thought on these things in silence for many years. We agreed that I had given the system a fair trial. I had not been easily discouraged. In the face of all these reverses I had continued to work as capably and as industriously as I could ever have worked for myself. And yet I had not succeeded.

Is it any wonder that we both loathed the service? Is it any wonder that we were both ready to make any sacrifice, almost, to escape it? Is it any wonder that we agreed that night to strike out and be rid of it, if it was not too late?

Turning Again to Law.

Our plan was that I should take what annual leave remained to my credit and use it all at the close of the year, add to that the next year's allowance, and obtain from the authorities two or three weeks further time without pay. Other clerks had been granted similar concessions to go abroad and I did not doubt that the authorities would grant it for the purpose of creating a vacancy and opening the way for two promotions. By that means I should have, altogether, about three months in which to make a trial at practicing law without cutting my little family adrift altogether. I thought some security, some anchor to the windward, was absolutely necessary. Had I been alone I could have cast off, and faced the prospect of starving without hesitating. But I was not alone, and I could not bring suffering and want upon those who depended upon me, not even to be free of the departments.

The success of my addresses in the course of the campaign and the conspicuous position they had given me, led us to choose our old home as the place of the trial. We wished to be near our parents, of course; but that would not have kept us from going to the Far West or some other new country more likely to yield me a practice than any other community in the nIUted States. And we were glad it was so.

I talked the matter over freely with Mr. Wheat, even indicating how much this late occurrence had moved us. He proved to be much such a friend as Colonel Powell. He was non-communicative and non-committal in words, but a great help in deeds. He arranged with the Secretary without formal application from me, that I should have the leave of absence I desired, and, more than that, he showed me a letter, two or three days after our second talk, on the subject, in which one of the foremost lawfirms of Chicago suggested—evidently in answer to a query from him—that it might have some law business for me to do "in the near future."

"Isn't All Honor, Mr. Schuyler."

One afternoon in the late fall he talked to me with freedom—for him—of the practice of law. I remember well how he looked, leaning back in his chair, with his left hand spread out over his cheek, as he said:

"This business of practicing law isn't all honor, Mr. Schuyler. From what I have seen of you, much of it will make you shrink—much of a real practice, I mean, and not just the edges of a practice.

"Do you realize that two-thirds of your business for several years must come by the collection of bad debts? That if the debtor is callous and shows no fear of your threats, you will leave him alone, but if he is honest and evinces a desire to be square you will hound him to death? That's what beginning a law practice means everywhere else, and I've no reason to doubt it will mean exactly that in Indiana.

"Another thing. Are you ready to see the good retainers all go to the low-grade men? If you are not, you must stoop to do things as counsel which you would never dream of doing as a self-respecting, justice-loving citizen."

All this made me think, of course, but it did not make me hesitate. I knew from my own experience what beginning a law practice meant in Indiana—a month of waiting for a chance to draw a deed; day after day of study, only to be "bluffed" out of my case by some story-telling country sharper with mother-wit enough to make the jury laugh; bitter antagonisms with opposing counsel over issues too little to justify a single unkind thought, much less a thousand unkind words; and the barter every election of the district attorneyship for political favors given and receipted for.

It Could Be Honest.

Yet the deed was honestly drawn and honestly paid for; could any clerk say as much for his work in the departments? The "bluffing" shyster might win ever so often in the lower courts, but the attorney with the law on his side need not fear, so long as he could appeal; but where was the appeal from a division clerk like O'Mara, or an examination like that which put letter writing above the specific work we had to do? The antagonisms of the courtroom were bitter; but they were no more bitter than the jealousises of the departments; jealousises that moved weak old men, like Mr. Jennings, to prepare charges against their subordinates merely to keep their workmates down. The barter of the district attorneyship—was that so bad, done out in the open with the eyes of the whole community on the transactions, as the barter of promotions behind closed doors with pull and private gain in lieu of influence?

No. No. The practice of the law might not be all honor. I knew it was not. But it was manly, and it could be honest, and above all it was free—free of toadyism and mock friendship—free of stolen credit—free of cowardice, unless a man chose himself to play the coward—free of soul-giving, spirit-beggaring worry, day after day, that some one's nod or another one's frown may drive a man's wife and children to starvation, and the man himself to the debtor's hell.

Were I to meet that choice now, as I met it then, I should choose to go. Were I to meet it in another form, now, or ten years hence, I should still choose to go. It would not be all fair sailing on a crystal sea. But it would be sailing with taut ropes in a sound bark—and it would be free.

(To Be Continued Next Sunday.)

THE MUSGRAVE RITUAL.

(Continued from Third Page.)

make his peace with the girl Howells, and then would engage her as his accomplice. Together they would come at night to the cellar, and their united force would suffice to raise the stone. So far I could follow their actions as if I had actually seen them.

"But for two of them, and one a woman, it must have been heavy work the raising of that stone. A burly Sussex policeman and I had found it no light job. What would they do to assist them? Probably what I should have done myself. I rose and examined carefully the different billets of wood which were scattered round the floor. Almost at once I came upon what I expected. One piece, about three feet in length, had a very marked indentation at one end, while several were flattened at the sides as if they had been compressed by some considerable weight. Evidently, as they had dragged the stone up they had thrust the chunks of wood into the chink, until at last, when the opening was large enough to crawl through, they would hold it open by a billet placed lengthwise, which might very well become indented at the lower end, since the whole weight of the stone would press it down on to the edge of this other slab. So far I was still on safe ground.

"And now how was I to proceed to reconstruct this midnight drama? Clearly, only one could fit into the hole, and that one was Brunton. The girl must have waited above. Brunton then unlocked the box, handed up the contents presumably—since they were not to be found—and then—and then what happened?

"What smouldering fire of vengeance had suddenly sprung into flame in this passionate Celtic woman's soul when she saw the man who had wronged her—wronged her, perhaps, far more than we suspected—in her power? Was it a chance that the wood had slipped, and that the stone had shut Brunton into what had become his sepulchre? Had she only been guilty of silence as to his fate? Or had some sudden blow from her hand dashed the support away and sent the slab crashing down into its place? Be that as it might, I seemed to see that woman's figure still clutching at her treasure trove and flying wildly up the winding stair, with her ears ringing perhaps with the muffled screams from behind her and with the drumming of frenzied hands against the slab of stone which was choking her faithless lover's life out.

"Here was the secret of her bleached face, her shaken nerves, her peals of hysterical laughter on the next morning. But what had been in the box? What had she done with that? Of course, it must have been the old metal and pebbles which my client had dragged from the mere. She had thrown them in there at the first opportunity to remove the last trace of her crime.

"For twenty minutes I had sat motionless, thinking the matter out. Musgrave still stood with a very pale face, swinging his lantern and peering down into the hole.

"'These are coins of Charles the First,' said he, holding out the few which had been in the box; 'you see we were right in fixing our date for the Ritual.'

"'We may find something else of Charles the First,' I cried, as the probable meaning of the first two questions of the Ritual broke suddenly upon me. 'Let me see the contents of the bag which you fished from the mere.'

"We ascended to his study, and he laid the debris before me. I could understand his regarding it as of small importance when I looked at it, for the metal was almost black and the stones lusterless and dull. I rubbed one of them on my sleeve, however, and it glowed afterwards like a spark in the dark hallow of my hand. The metal work was in the form of a double ring, but it had been bent and twisted out of its original shape.

"'You must bear in mind,' said I 'that the royal party made head in England even after the death of the king, and that when they at last fled they probably left many of their most precious possessions buried behind them, with the intention of returning for them in more peaceful times.'

"'My ancestor, Sir Ralph Musgrave, was a prominent cavalier and the right-hand man of Charles the Second in his wanderings,' said my friend.

"'Ah, indeed!' I answered. 'Well now, I think that really should give us the last link that we wanted. I must congratulate you on coming into the possession, though in rather a tragic manner, of a relic which is of great intrinsic value, but of even greater importance as an historical curiosity.'

"'What is it, then?' he gasped in astonishment.

"'It is nothing less than the ancient crown of the kings of England.'

"'The crown!'

"'Precisely: Consider what the ritual says. How does it run? "Whose was it?" "His who is gone." That was after the execution of Charles. Then, "Who shall have it?" "He who will come." That was Charles the Second, whose advent was already foreseen. There can, I think, be no doubt that this battered and shapeless diadem once encircled the brows of the royal Stuarts.'

"'And how came it in the pond?'

"'Ah, that is a question that will take some time to answer.' And with that I sketched out to him the whole long chain of surmise and of proof which I had constructed. The twilight had closed in and the moon was shining brightly in the sky before my narrative was finished.

"'And how was it then that Charles did not get his crown when he returned?' asked Musgrave, pushing back the relic into its linen bag.

"'Ah, there you lay your finger upon the one point which we shall probably never be able to clear up. It is likely that the Musgrave who held the secret died in the interval, and by some oversight left his guide to his descendant without explaining the meaning of it. From that day to this it has been handed down from father to son, until at last it came within reach of a man who tore its secret out of it and lost his life in the venture.'

"'And that's the story of the Musgrave Ritual, Watson. They have the crown down at Hurlstone—though they had some legal bother and a considerable sum to pay before they were allowed to retain it. I am sure that if you mentioned my name they would be happy to show it to you. Of the woman nothing was ever heard, and the probability is that she got away out of England and carried herself and the memory of her crime to some land beyond the seas.'